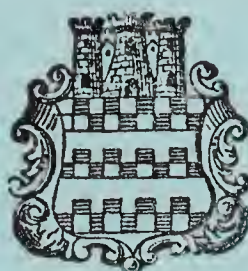


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BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON

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**ANNUAL REPORT**

OF THE



**Medical Officer of Health**

FOR THE

**YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1959**



BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON

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**ANNUAL REPORT**

OF THE

**MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH**

FOR THE

**Year ended 31st December, 1959**

---

**PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF**

*Medical Officer of Health*

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D., CH.B., D.P.H.

*Borough Engineer and Public Health Inspector*


R. A. BRUNSKILL, M.INST.R.A., M.R.S.H.

*Assistant Public Health Inspector*

E. FURSE

*Clerical Assistant*

MISS J. M. SHORT



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MR. MAYOR, ALDERMEN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit this my twenty-fifth Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 1959, in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Health.

The general health of the Borough was good throughout the year, and there were no epidemics of any kind.

The crude birth rate has risen 4.3 over those figures given for last year, but the crude death rate still remains high at 16.2, which is 4.6 higher than the Registrar-General's figures for the country as a whole.

The vital statistics are set out in the tables below:

SECTION "A"

General Statistics

Area (statute acres)	...	...	...	786
Population – 1931 Census	...	...	...	3,519
Population – 1951 Census	...	...	...	3,897
Estimated home population – mid-1959	...	...	...	3,900
Number of inhabited houses	...	...	...	1,230
Rateable value	...	...	...	£49,302
Product of the Penny Rate	...	...	...	£200 (estimated)
Loan Debt	...	...	...	£169,054. 14s. 10d.

Vital Statistics

					Male	Female	Total
BIRTHS	...	...	...	...	31	27	58
Legitimate	...	...	...	...	30	25	
Illegitimate	...	...	...	...	1	2	
DEATHS	...	...	...	...	31	32	63

England  
and Wales

LIVE BIRTHS

Number	...	...	...	...	...	58	
Rate per 1,000 population	...	...	...	...	...	14.8	16.5
Corrected birth rate	...	...	...	...	...	15.6	
Illegitimate live birth % of total live births	...	...	...	...	...	5.1%	

STILLBIRTHS

Number	...	...	...	...	...	3	
Rate per 1,000 total live and still births	...	...	...	...	...	49.1	20.7
Total live and still births	...	...	...	...	...	61	
Infant deaths (under one year)	...	...	...	...	...	1	

INFANT MORTALITY RATES

Total infant deaths per 1,000 total live births	...	...	...	...	...	17.2	22.0
Legitimate infant deaths per 1,000 total live legitimate births	...	...	...	...	...	18.1	
Illegitimate infants' deaths per 1,000 illegitimate live births	...	...	...	...	...	—	

								<i>England and Wales</i>
Neo-natal Mortality Rate (deaths under 4 weeks per 1,000 total live births)	...	...	...	...	...	...	17.2	
Early Neo-natal Mortality Rate (deaths under 1 week per 1,000 total live births)	...	...	...	...	...	...	17.2	
Peri-natal Mortality Rate (Stillbirths and deaths under 1 week combined per 1,000 total live and still births)	...	...	...	...	...	...	65.5	
MATERNAL MORTALITY (including abortion)								
Number	...	...	...	...	...	...	nil	
Rate per 1,000 total live and still births	...	...	...	...	...	...	—	
DEATHS								
Number	...	...	...	...	...	...	63	
Death Rate per 1,000 population	...	...	...	...	...	...	16.2	11.6
Corrected death rate	...	...	...	...	...	...	11.3	

<i>Year</i>		<i>Population</i>	<i>Birth Rate</i>	<i>Death Rate</i>
1955	...	3,840	14.8	12.2
1956	...	3,900	12.8	15.3
1957	...	3,910	8.7	10.4
1958	...	3,890	10.5	16.4
1959	...	3,900	14.8	16.2

*The chief causes of death were as follows:*

Cancer	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Vascular diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	11
Coronary diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	6
Other heart diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	13
Other circulatory diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Influenza	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Other respiratory diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Ulcer of the stomach	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Nephritis	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Other ill-defined diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	10
Accidental	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Suicide	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
TOTAL							63

### Ages of Death Table

<i>Age</i>				<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
Under 1 year	...	...	...	1	—	
1–5 years	...	...	...	—	—	
5–15 years	...	...	...	—	—	
15–25 years	...	...	...	—	1	
25–35 years	...	...	...	—	—	
35–45 years	...	...	...	—	—	
45–55 years	...	...	...	3	—	
55–65 years	...	...	...	5	3	
65–75 years	...	...	...	6	5	
75 and over	...	...	...	16	23	
TOTAL				31	32	= 63



## SECTION "B"

### General Provision of Health Services

There was no change in the general provision of the health service during the year.

### National Assistance Act, 1948

No use was made during the year of the provisions of Section 47 of this Act.

### Ambulances

A highly satisfactory service, which provides a twenty-four hour cover for the district as a whole, is given by the St. John Ambulance Brigade, under delegated powers from the Local County Health Authority.

The new Ambulance Station and Headquarters in Mill Street was opened on the 8th August, 1959, by the Lord Lieutenant of the County, Lord Roborough, accompanied by the senior members of the Association and Brigade.

This station has been a great help in the efficient working of this humanitarian service, and is manned day and night, and is ever busy both for cases of illness directed by the doctors, and for accident cases which are so prevalent on this trunk road to Cornwall.

I cannot speak too highly of the excellent work carried out by the Officers and men of this Brigade of which I have the honour to be Divisional Surgeon.

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## SECTION "C"

### Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

#### Water Supply

Since the passing of the North Devon Water Board Act a number of years ago there has been a gradual assimilation of local water supplies by the services of the Board. At the present time the whole of this vast area of West Devon resolves itself, with the small exception of Okehampton Borough, between the North Devon Water Board and the water undertaking of the Corporation of Plymouth. This rationalisation of water supplies has undoubtedly had a most remarkable and beneficial effect on the rural community, particularly farming, but although the Water Board have already laid many hundreds of miles of pipeline, their job is by no means yet done, and neither is that area which is the responsibility of the Corporation completely served.

Whilst assessing this vast improvement to the supply of water one is naturally led to the actual quality of this commodity. Taking firstly the water itself: this is predominantly surface water, either collected and stored, as is the case of the Corporation, or taken direct from an upland surface supply of seepage from vast collections of peat, direct from a river, or underground storage, as in the case of Taw Marsh. The natural qualities of these waters is interesting in so far as they are acidic, and by reason of this are bacteriostatic. Much has been said in the past about the malicious action of acidic waters on metals such as lead or zinc, but this propensity can be very largely eliminated without reduction to full neutrality whilst still retaining its bacteriostatic qualities. One is, therefore, driven to the question as to the necessity, or even desirability, on any public health grounds of chlorinating such sources of supply. In the case of Okehampton Borough, which I have taken a most lively interest in for the past quarter of a century, no chlorination has ever been allowed, neither has any bacteriological contamination been discovered, owing, the Surveyor thinks, to the efficiency of his filters, but I would suggest that this bacteriostatic action of the water is an important contribution to its purity.

As everyone knows, chlorine is a most violent poison in its raw state, owing to its intense chemical activity. In one of my authorities, which has of necessity, owing to excessive pollution, to super-chlorinate the water, the tests on the behaviour of cut flowers in this supply are somewhat remarkable, as they have a length of life several days less than the same flowers watered by a supply from the local river. What the effects of this element chlorine are on the animal constitution I have no evidence, but I feel that before such pure waters, coming from the Dartmoor highlands, are molested with chemicals of this nature, searching enquiry should be made into the scientific need for such treatment. My recommendation is that chlorination of these waters should be restricted for emergency purposes only, as when major structural engineering projects are in operation with untested labour.

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Water supply remains as in previous years. It is of unlimited quantity and excellent quality.

The year 1959, particularly during the summer and autumn, was one of severe drought conditions, and the watersheds were drier than for many years. Despite this, no restrictions on the distribution supply were necessary and none, not even on the use of hosepipes, were imposed. Indeed, all requests for emergency supplies to surrounding rural areas, particularly agricultural supplies, were granted without inconvenience.

Of 47 samples taken for bacteriological analysis, 46 passed the Ministry of Health Class 1 Standard. The one sample which failed was taken from a dirty tap.

### **Intake Mains**

Approximately three miles of mains in the Artillery danger zones have again escaped serious damage and functioned properly throughout the year. On the No. 2 Black-a-van Intake Main only minor adjustments of break-pressure valves have been necessary.

### **Filtration and treatment**

The pressure filtration and lime treatment plant at Brackentor has been in continuous operation throughout the year. Minor intermittent faults were remedied by the attendant.

The sludge-beds were cleared and overhauled.

Filters are normally washed daily. During May a complete overhaul of Filter No. 3, including removal, washing and replacement of sand, reinforcing and repair of interior diaphragm plate, was carried out by the Council's staff.

### **Distribution**

Zonal distribution, giving a stabilised pressure in the controlled low-level area and maintaining pressure in the outer high-level zones, has now been in continuous operation for twenty-two years without interruption except for repairs.

In Brackentor Lane the 6-in. and 4-in. mains are linked by three 1½-in. connecting pipes.

In North Street all the services were overhauled prior to the resurfacing of the road, and eleven service pipes were renewed.

In Brandize Park the 3-in. cast-iron main was cut for examination and found to be in good condition but with considerable peaty deposit.

At Castle Cottages the wash-out main was extended and connected to the surface water drain.



The pressure-gauge control-box at Parklands has again proved most useful in maintenance of proper pressures on the H.P. mains. Minor repairs and overhaul were carried out at the Station Road Pressure-reducing Valve.

New services and supply pipes are now mainly laid in copper and polythene tubes. Service stopcocks fixed direct on the mains obviate cutting off main supplies during repairs. New services have been provided for six new properties and seven existing properties, and mains at the Wonnacotts Housing Site, Crediton Road, were connected.

In accordance with the Council's policy for large consumers, water meters were fixed at trade premises, garages, schools and similar buildings. These meters work satisfactorily.

**Rainfall**

Rainfall records are taken monthly at Cranmere Pool and Newbridge on the watershed, and daily at the Filter Station and at the Pleasure Gardens. Returns are sent monthly to the Air Ministry Meteorological Office and Devon River Board, and are set out below for the past four years:

			1959	1958	1957	1956
Cranmere	...	...	70.00	—	96.70	76.00
Newbridge	...	...	56.00	—	73.40	57.00
Filter Station	...	...	60.01	58.33	55.65	45.82
Pleasure Gardens	...	...	59.58	55.48	49.11	43.07
Dry Days (no rain)	...	...	186	232	207	189

The driest months were September, February, May and August; and the wettest, December, November, January and October, in those orders. Dry spells were January–February (13 days), June (14 days), July–August (12 days), and September (14 days). The heaviest fall was 2.19 in. on November 25th, and there was more than 1-in. fall on thirteen other days. Of the total rainfall, over half fell in the last three months, October–December. The weather on the watersheds remained almost consistently dry from May until early October, but the available supply at the Intakes continued adequate.

**Drainage and Sewerage**

Sewers and sewage disposal works have continued to operate satisfactorily without serious defects. The irrigation channels were partially cleared of deposit and weeds. Effluent standards have been well maintained and no complaints as to river pollution have been received.

**Rivers and Streams**

The East and West Ockment rivers are self-cleansing and very clean. Solid rubbish is periodically removed.

**Public Conveniences**

During the year the Borough Architect designed and carried out the erection of new Public Conveniences with a large Public Shelter at Fairplace Rest Garden. The structure is of brick with a flat roof and interior walls and floors of marble Terrazzo. Six women's and four men's water-closets, a six-stall urinal and four lavatory basins are provided.

**Public Cleansing, Refuse Collection and Disposal**

Refuse collection and disposal have continued with weekly and twice-weekly collections. Street cleansing is carried out over some areas at the same time as refuse collection. Normal street cleansing is daily by orderly truck, including Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings.

Salvage

Small quantities of scrap metals have been disposed of, but there is no worthwhile demand for waste paper, much of which has to be burnt on the tip.

Disinfection

Minor disinfestation treatment has been in individual houses for flies.

Rodent Control

In accordance with M.A.F.F. requirements, rodent control continued as required throughout the year with a part-time operator. Block control has, again been carried out where necessary to a progressively lessening extent and incidence. Sewer treatment showed comparatively little infestation and only in limited areas.

Factories and Workshops

Factories Act, 1937 and 1948. Tables showing the number of inspections made, cases in which defects were found, and the number of outworkers in the town, are set out in the Tables at the end of this report.

Smoke Abatement

Two minor cases of smoke emission, both from laundries, were dealt with by informal action.

Fish Frying

One small, fish frying shop and one larger fish frying shop and cafe have been well conducted.

Offensive Trades

At the two establishments seven inspections were made. No action has been necessary.

Sanitary Inspections of the Area

The following visits and inspections were carried out during the year:

Houses – repairs	...	...	...	...	...	86
Houses – rehousing	...	...	...	...	...	20
Drainage	...	...	...	...	...	24
Public Conveniences	...	...	...	...	...	74
Sewerage	...	...	...	...	...	30
Water Supply, including Housing	...	...	...	...	...	102
Rivers	...	...	...	...	...	51
Refuse Disposal	...	...	...	...	...	23
Miscellaneous	...	...	...	...	...	—
Bakehouses	...	...	...	...	...	9
Refuse Disposal Tip	...	...	...	...	...	25
Rodents	...	...	...	...	...	8
Tents and Vans	...	...	...	...	...	4
Schools	...	...	...	...	...	9
Disinfestation and Disinfection	...	...	...	...	...	2
Animals	...	...	...	...	...	14
Food and Meat Shops	...	...	...	...	...	201
Egg Packing Stations	...	...	...	...	...	15
Offensive Trades	...	...	...	...	...	7
Informal Notices Remedied	...	...	...	...	...	9

SECTION "D"

Housing

Housing Repairs

Individual defective houses were inspected and seven were rendered fit by informal notice. Two houses were dealt with under the Rent Act and three under the Housing and House Purchase Act, 1959.

Housing, Management, Maintenance and Repairs

Normal maintenance repairs have been minor in character and small in numbers. All repairs except electrical and exterior painting are carried out by the Council's own small maintenance staff.

Two private houses were in progress at the beginning of the year, five were completed during the year, and one was in course of erection at the end of the year. The number of private houses built and in progress during the year was again approximately the same as the average for pre-war years.

SECTION "E"

Inspection and Supervision of Food

Milk

During the year, samples of milk have been taken as follows:

			<i>Samples</i>	<i>Passed</i>	<i>Failed</i>
Undesignated	...	...	—	—	—
T.T.	...	...	46	39	7
T.T. Pasteurised	...	...	13	11	2

Forty-two inspections of cowsheds, dairies and milk shops were made and informal notices were given as and when necessary. The general standard of cleanliness has been good. The area became wholly attested during the year.

Ice Cream

Samples of Ice Cream for bacteriological examinations were taken during the year with the following results:

Grade I	...	...	7	} Passed
Grade II	...	...	5	
Grade III	...	...	1	Failed

Slaughterhouses

One slaughterhouse has been in regular use and has been well maintained. Arrangements made with the Rural District Council of Okehampton for their Meat Inspector to operate in the Borough have continued to function satisfactorily.

A special meeting was held during the year with butchers to consider the new Slaughterhouse Regulations.

The total weight of unfit meat and offal condemned was 2 tons 4 cwts. 92 lb.

Details of the number of animals killed and inspected and the carcasses, parts or organs condemned are set out in the table on page 11.

Bakehouses, Meat and Food Shops

These premises have been well maintained. Minor improvements have been carried out in a number of them. Inspections were made and two informal notices were given.



New Bye-laws made under Section 15 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, for the proper handling of food sold for human consumption, have been in force since February, 1952.

The number of food premises in the area are as follows:

Grocers	...	...	...	...	13
Greengrocers	...	...	...	...	8
Confectioners	...	...	...	...	4
Bread and Cakes	...	...	...	...	4
Meat Shops	...	...	...	...	7
Fish Shops	...	...	...	...	2
Milk Shops	...	...	...	...	2
Dairies	...	...	...	...	3
Hotels and Bars	...	...	...	...	9
Cafes	...	...	...	...	8

There is also a very large and modern hatchery, and one large and three smaller egg-grading and packing stations, all of which have been maintained in good order.

**Other Foodstuffs**

Visits to food shops resulted in fifty-two condemnation certificates being issued. These were mainly canned foods which had deteriorated owing to defective containers, but one fowl was condemned as being unfit by reason of decomposition. The total weight of food condemned was 4½ cwts. Condemned food is destroyed at the Council’s refuse disposal tip.

**Food Hygiene Regulations**

In accordance with the Ministry of Food instructions implementation of the Regulations has been maintained.

Attention has again been given to markets and outside stalls and vans with further improvement in the storage of and display of edible foods.

During recent years there has been a considerable increase in catering for bed and breakfast in a number of private houses during the tourist season.

**Food Poisoning**

No cases of food poisoning were notified during the year.

**Samples taken under Section 3, Food and Drugs Act, 1938**

Scones and Butter	}	ALL GENUINE
Whisky		
Whisky		
Beef Sausage		
Fruit Sauce		
Pineapple Jam		
Fish Spread		
Wholemeal Flour		
Beef Sausage		
Bottled Cider		
Margarine with 10% Butter		
Mincemeat		
Ham and Tongue Roll		

Milk – 93 samples.  
Lemonade – was found to contain mouse excreta.  
The defendants were fined £20 plus  
£9 costs on 14/4/59.



## CARCASSES AND OFFAL INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED IN WHOLE OR IN PART

	<i>Cattle, excluding Cows</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Lambs and Sheep</i>	<i>Pigs</i>
Number killed (if known) ... ..	288	11	2	1,169	591
Number inspected ...	288	11	2	1,169	591
<i>All diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysterci:</i>					
Whole carcasses con- demned ... ..	—	—	—	32	4
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ...	152	7	—	153	31
Percentage of the num- ber inspected affec- ted with disease other than tuberculosis and cysticerici ... ..	52.77%	63.63%	—	15.82%	5.92%
<i>Tuberculosis only:</i>					
Whole carcasses con- demned ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ...	6	—	—	—	9
Percentage of the num- ber inspected affec- ted with tuberculosis	2.08%	—	—	—	1.52%
<i>Cysticercosis:</i>					
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ...	1	—	—	—	—
Carcases submitted to treatment by refrig- eration ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Generalised and totally condemned ...	—	—	—	—	—

SECTION "F"

Prevalence of, and Control over, Infectious and other Diseases  
Diphtheria

No cases of diphtheria were notified during the year.

Poliomyelitis

No cases of poliomyelitis were notified during the year.

Infectious Diseases Notified by Medical Practitioners

		<i>Scarlet Fever</i>		<i>Measles</i>	
		<i>M.</i>	<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>F.</i>
Under one year	...	—	—	—	—
1— 2 years	...	—	—	—	—
3— 4 years	...	—	—	—	—
5— 9 years	...	—	1	—	—
10—14 years	...	1	1	—	—
15—25 years	...	—	—	—	—
25 and over	...	—	—	—	—
Age unknown	...	1	—	1	—
TOTAL		2	2	1	—

Infectious Diseases Notified by School Authorities

Nil.

Tuberculosis

No deaths were recorded during the year, and no new cases were notified.  
At the end of the year thirty cases remained on the Register as follows:

<i>Pulmonary</i>		<i>Non-Pulmonary</i>	
<i>M.</i>	<i>F.</i>	<i>M.</i>	<i>F.</i>
15	11	2	2

In conclusion, I would thank the Mayor and Corporation for the ready hearing my proposals always receive, and the Public Health Staff and others who have assisted in the preparation of this report.

I am, Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Your obedient Servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,  
*Medical Officer of Health.*

# Factories Acts, 1937 and 1948

## 1. INSPECTIONS FOR PURPOSES OF PROVISION AS TO HEALTH (including Inspections made by Public Health Inspectors)

<i>Premises</i>	<i>Number on Register</i>	<i>Number of</i>		
		<i>Inspection</i>	<i>Written Notices</i>	<i>Occupiers Prosecuted</i>
(1) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ... ..	30	59	1	—
(2) Factories not included in (1) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ...	14	23	—	—
(3) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding outworkers' premises) ... ..	7	4	—	—
TOTAL ...	51	86	1	—

## 2. CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>Number of cases in which defects were found</i>				<i>Number of cases in which Prosecutions were instituted</i>
	<i>Found</i>	<i>Remedied</i>	<i>Referred to H.M. Inspector</i>	<i>by H.M. Inspector</i>	
Want of Cleanliness	1	1	—	—	—
Overcrowding	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable Temperature	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate Ventilation	—	—	—	—	—
Ineffective drainage of floors	—	—	—	—	—
<i>Sanitary Conven'ces</i>					
(a) Insufficient	—	—	—	—	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective	—	—	—	—	—
(c) Not separate for sexes	—	—	—	—	—
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork)	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL ...	1	1	—	—	—

3. OUTWORK (Sections 110 and 111)

<i>Nature of Work</i>	SECTION 110			SECTION 111		
	<i>No. of out- workers in August list required by Section 110 (1) (c)</i>	<i>No. of cases of default in sending lists to Council</i>	<i>No. of pro- secutions for failure to supply lists</i>	<i>No. of instances of work in unwholesome premises</i>	<i>Notices served</i>	<i>Prosecu- tions</i>
Wearing Apparel (Making, etc.)	Nil	—	—	—	—	—
...						









